

Remarks in Chillicothe, Ohio*September 10, 2004*

The President. Thank you all for coming. I'm honored to be here. Old Bob Ney, he said, "Why don't you come over to the Ross County Fairgrounds. Maybe a couple of people will come over and say hello." Thanks for having me. It's good to be here. I'm here to ask for the vote; that's what I'm doing.

I've been traveling on that bus throughout your beautiful State telling people I'd like their vote. And we're ending our bus trip right here in Ross County, and it's a good place to stop. This is where the people work hard. They value family. They like hunting and fishing, and they love their country.

I'm traveling with my friend Zell Miller. He—what Zell said is something I appreciate. He said, "You can be a Democrat and vote for George W. Bush." I understand there's a lot of people here in this part of your State who call themselves Democrats, and we welcome you here, and we welcome your vote. I want to thank my friend Zell Miller for traveling with me. He's a great American. He is a solid, solid citizen of this great country. And I'm proud to call him friend.

Not only am I here to ask for your vote, I'm here to ask for your help. I'd like for you to go out and register your friends and neighbors. Remind them they have a duty to do in this democracy of ours, to participate in the process. So go to your coffee shops and your community centers, and register people. Register our Republican friends, the independents, and discerning Democrats. Not only register them, I'm here to ask you, then, to get them to go to the polls, voting time. And when you head them to the polls, remind them if they want a safer America, a stronger America, a better America, to put me and Dick Cheney back in office.

I am sorry Laura is not here today.

Audience members. Aw-w-w!

The President. Most people usually do groan. *[Laughter]* So when I asked her to marry me, I said, "Will you?" And she said, "Fine—*[laughter]*—"just so long as I don't have to give any political speeches." *[Laughter]* I said, okay, you don't have to give any political speeches. Fortunately, she didn't

hold me to my word. *[Laughter]* See, last week in New York, people got to see Laura. They got to see her calm, steady, compassionate self. I love her dearly. And perhaps the most important reason to put me back in to office is so she'll be First Lady for 4 more years.

I appreciate my runningmate, Dick Cheney. I'm proud to be running with him. Admittedly, he doesn't have the waviest hair in the race. *[Laughter]* I didn't pick him for his hair. *[Laughter]* I picked him because he's a man of sound judgment, strong experience, and he can get the job done for the American people.

I appreciate Congressman Bob Ney, straight shooter, good friend, and a fine Member of the United States Congress.

I'm proud your Governor is here. Mr. Governor, thank you for coming. I appreciate my friend Bob Taft joining us today. I'm going to thank my friend Rob Portman, Congressman from the Cincinnati area, Congressman from the district right next door—great American. Thank you for coming, Robbie.

I appreciate it. I'm proud Mike DeWine is with us today. Mike is a fine United States Senator. I want to thank—oh, by the way, speaking about Senators, put Voinovich back in there. He's running too. He's a great United States Senator. He's serving these people—the people of this State with class and dignity, and I'm proud to call him friend. I know you're proud to call him Senator.

And I want to thank Attorney General Jim Petro for being here. Senator Doug White—I want to thank all the senators and house members who are here. I want to thank the local officials who've come. Thank you for serving.

I appreciate my friend Anthony Munoz, who's with us today. You might remember Anthony. He's nothing but an NFL Hall of Famer. He's a Hall of Famer in my book too because he's trying to help us get re-elected here in the State of Ohio.

I want to thank John Stone, the country music artist who was here today. I appreciate, John.

We've had a great trip. I had the honor of visiting on the bus with some employees from Piketon. I appreciate those workers for being with me today. I reminded them, in

the year 2000, I wrote the Governor a letter. I said, "If I'm President, I'm going to save that plant." Promise made; promise kept.

Appreciate the grassroots activists who are here. Those are the people who put up all the signs we saw coming in today, people who will man phones when it comes time to get people to vote, people who are going to talk it up when it comes time to talk it up. Thank you for what you have done, and thank you for what you're going to do. With your help, we will carry Ohio again. With your help, we will be able to serve this great country for 4 more years.

Audience members. Four more years! Four more years! Four more years!

The President. I'm looking forward to this campaign. I like getting out with the people. I like to tell people where I stand, what I believe, and where I'm going to lead this Nation.

I believe every child can learn, and we expect every school to teach. I went to Washington to challenge the soft bigotry of low expectations. I believe every child can learn. We've raised the standards. We're measuring early so we can solve problems now, before it's too late. We trust the local people to make the right decisions for the schools. We're making progress here in America. We're closing the achievement gap, and we're not turning back.

I believe we have a moral responsibility to honor our seniors with good health care. You might remember the endless debates on Medicare. As a matter of fact, they used to call it "Mediscare." I went to Washington to fix problems. We had a problem in Medicare. People say, "What do you mean?" Well, I'll tell you what I mean. Medicare would pay \$100,000 for heart surgery, but they wouldn't pay for the medicines to prevent the heart surgery from being needed in the first place. That wasn't right for the seniors. That was lousy for the taxpayers. Beginning in 2006, our seniors will get prescription drug coverage: they'll get a modern system, and we're not turning back.

I believe in the energy, innovation, and spirit of America's workers, small-business owners, and farmers. And that is why we unleashed that energy with the largest tax cut in a generation.

When you're out there rounding up the vote, remind people we've been through a lot. This economy has been through a lot. You know, months before we got ere, the stock market started to decline. Right after we got there, they declared a recession. Then we had corporate scandals. By the way, it is now clear in America, we will not tolerate dishonesty in the boardrooms of America. And then we got attacked. Some people estimate that attack cost us a million jobs in the 3 months after the attack.

But we've overcome those obstacles. We've overcome them because we've got great people here in America. I believe we've overcome them because our economic stimulus plan is working. See, this economy is strong; it is getting stronger. We've been growing at rates as fast as any in nearly 20 years. We've added 1.7 million new jobs since August of '03. The national unemployment rate is 5.4 percent, lower than the average rate of the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s.

I fully understand there are parts of your great State which are lagging behind the national recovery. But that doesn't mean we ought to go to lousy policies. That means we ought to continue the progrowth policies that we put in place. We ought to continue to grow this economy so people can find work.

I believe a President must confront problems, not pass them on to future generations or future Presidents. I believe the most solemn duty of the American President is to protect the American people. If America shows uncertainty and weakness in this decade, the world will drift toward tragedy. This isn't going to happen on my watch.

I'm running for President with a clear and positive plan to build a safer world and a more hopeful America. I'm running with a compassionate conservative philosophy that Government should help people improve their lives, not try to run their lives. I believe this Nation wants steady, consistent, principled leadership, and that is why, with your help, we'll win a great nationwide victory in November.

I fully understand the world in which we live in is changing. See, our dads and granddads generally had one job, one career, worked for one company that provided health and pension plans. The world we live

in is different from that. Most people have more than one career. They change jobs several times. The most significant change in our workplace is that a lot of women work in the home and out of the home now. Yet the fundamental systems haven't changed. See, these are systems designed for yesterday, not tomorrow, the Tax Code, health coverage, and pension plans and worker training. In a new term, we will transform these systems so all citizens are equipped, prepared, and thus truly free to make your own choices, to be able to pursue your own dreams.

Any hopeful society is one in which this economy is moving forward. To create more jobs in America, America must be the best place in the world to do business. To create more jobs here, we need to reduce the regulations that burden our employers. To create new jobs here, we've got to do something about these frivolous lawsuits that make it hard for small businesses to expand. To create jobs here, we need a sound energy policy.

Listen, 2 years ago, I submitted a plan to the United States Congress, and it got stuck, for political reasons. It needs to get unstuck. If we want jobs here, we need a plan that encourages conservation, encourages the use of renewables like ethanol and biodiesel, modernizes the electricity grid, uses coal—clean coal technology, a plan that makes us less dependent on foreign sources of energy.

If we want to keep jobs here, we've got to open up markets around the world for U.S. products. See, we open up the markets for foreign goods, and that's good for you. If you've got more choices, it's going to mean you'll get what you want at a better price and a better quality. So my message to places like China is, "You treat us the way we treat you." That's why I'm enforcing these laws. Rather than fallen prey to the language of economic isolationism, what I'm saying is, "You open up your markets," because we can compete with anybody, anytime, anywhere, so long as the rules are fair.

Listen, to create jobs, we've got to be wise about how we spend your money in Washington, and we've got to keep your taxes low. Taxes are an issue in this campaign. See, the fellow I'm running against has so far proposed over \$2 trillion in new Federal spending.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. And we still got October to go—[laughter]—and a lot of September. So they asked him, they said, "Well, how are you going to pay for it?" He said, "Oh, you know, I'm just going to tax the rich." Two problems with that. One is that, his plan to tax the rich raises about \$650 billion. If you propose \$2.2 trillion and your plan raises \$650 billion, you're a little short. [Laughter] You know what that means, don't you, when they get that shortfall between the promise and the plan? You're going to get stuck. The other problem with that plan of taxing the rich is, we've heard that rhetoric before out of Washington. See, that's why they hire accountants and lawyers, so you get stuck with the bill. We're not going to let him tax you because we're going to win in November.

We need to do something about the Tax Code as well. This Tax Code of ours is too complicated. It is full of special interest loopholes. It takes the American people about 6 billion hours a year to fill out their taxes. That is too much time. In a new term, I'm going to call Republicans and Democrats together and make this Tax Code more simple and more fair, for the sake of economic growth and for the sake of fairness to the taxpayer.

In a changing world, jobs change. And I know that, and you know that. In order to help people when jobs change, we've got to make sure our community colleges are more accessible for American workers. We want people to be able to train for the skills that are needed to fill the jobs of the 21st century. Same things comes to our high school students. Most new jobs today are filled by people with 2 years of college, yet one in four of our students gets there. That's why we will fund early intervention programs to help at-risk students in high school. We'll place a new focus on math and science so the kids have got the skills necessary to fill the new jobs. Over time, we'll require a rigorous exam before graduation. By raising performance in high schools and by expanding Pell grants for low- and middle-income families, we'll help more Americans start their career with a college diploma.

We've got to do more to make sure health care is available and affordable. More than

half of the uninsured are employees of small businesses. See, small businesses are having trouble affording health care. One way to help small businesses afford health care and to take care of American families is to allow them to join together to purchase insurance at the discounts available to big companies. Another way to help small businesses and the workers is to expand health savings accounts. We'll expand community health centers in every poor county in America, to help people get preventative care and primary care.

To make sure health care is available and affordable, we got to do something about these frivolous lawsuits that are running good docs out of practice and running your costs up. See, you cannot be pro-doctor, pro-hospital, pro-patient, and pro-trial-lawyer at the same time. You have to choose. My opponent made his choice, and he put him on the ticket. I made my choice. I'm for medical liability reform—now. In all we do to improve health care, we'll make sure the health care decisions are made by patients and doctors, not by bureaucrats in Washington, DC.

In changing times, stability can be brought to people's life if they own something. I believe in promoting an ownership society in America. One of the most hopeful statistics of the last couple of years is that under my administration, homeownership rates are at an alltime high. More and more people are owning their own home. We've got a plan over the next years to promote more ownership. We want people opening up the front door, saying, "Welcome to my home. Welcome to my piece of property."

I see a lot of younger workers here. I want to thank you all for coming. I want to talk to you right quick about pension plans, Social Security. If you're an older worker, Social Security will take care of you. I don't care what they say in the campaign. You've heard it every 4 years, "They're going to take away your Social Security check." That's old, stale, tired, Washington, DC, talk. You're going to be just fine. Baby boomers like me are going to be just fine when it comes to Social Security. We need to worry about our children and our grandchildren. And so therefore, I believe younger workers ought to be able to take some of their own money and set up a personal account to help them with Social

Security, a personal account they can call their own, a personal account Government cannot take away.

We have a difference of philosophy in this campaign. If you listen carefully to the rhetoric of my opponent, they all aim to expand Government. This campaign intends to expand opportunity because we trust the American people.

In a world of change, there are some things that do not change, the values we live by, courage and compassion, reverence and integrity. In a time of change, we'll support the institutions that matter, that bring us stability, our families, our schools, our religious congregations. We stand for a culture of life in which every person counts and every being matters. We stand for marriage and family, which are the foundations of our society. We stand for the Second Amendment, which gives every American the individual right to bear arms. I stand for the appointment of Federal judges who know the difference between personal opinion and the strict interpretation of the law.

This election will also determine how America responds to the continuing danger of terrorism. Since the terrible morning of September the 11th, 2001, we've fought the terrorists across the Earth, not for pride, not for power, but because the lives of our citizens are at stake. Our strategy is clear. We're defending the homeland. We're transforming our military. We're strengthening our intelligence services. We will stay on the offensive. We will chase the terrorists around the world so we do not have to face them here at home. We will work to advance liberty in the broader Middle East and elsewhere, and we will prevail.

Our strategy is succeeding. Four years ago, Afghanistan was the home base of Al Qaida; Pakistan was a transit point for terrorist groups; Saudi Arabia was fertile ground for terrorist fundraising; Libya was secretly pursuing nuclear weapons; Iraq was a gathering threat; Al Qaida was largely unchallenged as it planned attacks. Because we led, the Government of a free Afghanistan is fighting terror; Pakistan is capturing terrorist leaders; Saudi Arabia is making raids and arrests; Libya is dismantling its weapons programs;

the army of a free Iraq is fighting for freedom; and more than three-quarters of Al Qaida's key members and associates have been brought to justice. We have led. Many have joined, and America and the world are safer.

This progress involved careful diplomacy, clear moral purpose, and some tough decisions. The toughest came on Iraq. We knew Saddam Hussein's record of aggression and support for terror. We knew his long history of pursuing and using weapons of mass destruction. We knew that after September the 11th, we must think differently. We must take threats seriously before they fully materialize.

In Saddam Hussein we saw a threat. I went to the United States Congress. I said, "We see a threat." They looked at the same intelligence, remembered the same history that we remembered, and concluded Saddam Hussein was a threat, and they authorized the use of force. My opponent looked at the very same intelligence I looked at, and he concluded Saddam Hussein was a threat and voted "yes" when it came to the authorization of force.

Before the Commander in Chief puts troops in harm's way, we must try every avenue to solve the problem. I was hoping diplomacy would work. I went to the United Nations. I said, "We see a threat." They looked at the same intelligence. They remembered the same history. They concluded Saddam Hussein was a threat. They passed a U.N. Security Council resolution 15 to nothing that said, "Saddam Hussein, disclose, disarm, or face serious consequences." The world spoke.

But as he had for resolution after resolution after resolution, Saddam Hussein ignored the demands of the free world. As a matter of fact, when the U.N. sent inspectors in, he systematically deceived them.^B

So I'm now confronted with a choice. The choice was whether to take the word of a madman, to forget the lessons of September the 11th, or take action to defend this country. Given that choice, I will defend America every time.

Because we acted to defend our country, 50 million people in Afghanistan and Iraq now live in freedom. And the world is better

off. It wasn't all that long ago that young girls didn't get to go to school in Afghanistan because of the backward ways of the Taliban. It wasn't all that long ago that their mothers were pulled out in the public square and whipped because they wouldn't toe the line to their dismal ideology of hatred. But think about this. Today, 10 million people, 40 percent women, have registered to vote in the upcoming Presidential election. It's amazing. Freedom is so powerful. People long to be free.

In Iraq, despite ongoing violence, there's a strong Prime Minister, a National Council, and national elections are scheduled for January.

We'll stand with the people of Afghanistan and Iraq. It's in our interest we stand with them. As well when America gives its word, America must keep its word. I say it's in our interest—I believe it is because freedom societies in the Middle East will be hopeful societies which no longer feed resentments and breed export—breed violence for export. Freedom governments in the Middle East will fight terrorists instead of harboring them. And that will make us safer in the long run.

Our strategy is clear in those countries. We will help new leaders train their armies so they can do the hard work of defending themselves. We'll help them move toward elections. We'll get them on the path of stability and democracy as quickly as possible, and then our troops will return home with the honor they have earned.

We've got a great United States military. I want to thank the veterans who have joined us today for setting such a great example for those who wear today's uniform. I've seen the unselfish courage of our troops. I know their decency. The cause of freedom is in really good hands.

I made a pledge to those who wear the uniform and their loved ones that the Federal Government will give them all the support they need to do their jobs. That's why a year ago, I went to the United States Congress and proposed supplemental funding for \$87 billion. It was an important piece of legislation, really important. It provided funding for body armor and spare parts, ammunition, fuel, supplies, necessary money for troops in harm's way in both Iraq and Afghanistan. We

received great bipartisan support in the Halls of Congress. The support was so strong that only 12 Members of the United States Senate voted against the vital funding, 2 of whom are my opponent and his runningmate.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. No, I know. In fact, only four United States Senators voted to authorize the use of force and then voted against funding our troops. And two of those are my opponent and his runningmate.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. You might remember when he said, when they asked my opponent why, and he said, "Well, of course, I did vote for the \$87 billion, right before I voted against it." Not exactly the way they talk here in Ross County. [Laughter] He went on to say, well—said he was proud of the vote. And finally, he just said, "It's a complicated matter." There's nothing complicated about supporting our troops in combat.

See, I think a Commander in Chief must be clear and steady. When it comes to Iraq, my opponent has more different positions than all his colleagues in the Senate combined. [Laughter] Senator Kerry once said, "It would naïve to the point of grave danger not to believe that if left to his own devices, Saddam Hussein will provoke, misjudge, or stumble into a future of more dangerous confrontation with the civilized world." End quote. That's what he said.

In 2002, he voted for the war but then voted against the funding for body armor and combat pay and other needed measures. When the heat got on him in the Democrat primary, he declared himself the antiwar candidate. Then several months later, he said he would still have voted to go to war even knowing everything we know today. Earlier this week, he adopted the language of his one-time rival Howard Dean, saying, "It's the wrong war at the wrong * time," even though he earlier said it was the right decision and he supported it.

The newest wrinkle is that Senator Kerry has now decided we're spending too much money in Iraq, even though he earlier criticized us for not spending enough. One thing about Senator Kerry's position is clear: If he

had his way, Saddam Hussein would still be in power and would still be a threat to the security of America and the world.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. I want to thank our friends and allies for the contributions they've made to making this world a more peaceful place. There are nearly 40 nations involved in Afghanistan, some 30 nations involved in Iraq. The next 4 years, we'll continue to work with our allies and friends, but I will never turn over America's national security decisions to leaders of other countries.

I believe in the transformational power of liberty. The wisest use of American strength is to advance freedom. I tell people about the fact that I've got great relations with the Prime Minister of Japan. We have consultations. We talk about important matters. What's interesting about those consultations is, it wasn't all that long ago in the march of history that Japan was a sworn enemy. My dad fought against the Japanese. Your dads and granddads, husbands fought against the Japanese. They were the sworn enemy.

After we won in World War II, my predecessor Harry Truman and many Americans believed that if Japan would become a free society, the world would be better off. A lot of people were skeptical about that in America, at that time. You can understand why. They were the enemy. But they had—my predecessor had great faith that liberty could transform an enemy into a friend.

Because we helped Japan become a democracy, today, I sit at the table with the head of a former enemy talking about the peace, talking about how to see the Korean Peninsula is more peaceful, talking about Iraq and how to keep the peace there. We're talking about feeding the hungry and helping people with disease. We're sitting down as allies and friends talking about a better world.

Someday, a free Iraq is going to elect a leader, and an American President is going to be sitting down with him or her, and they'll be talking about the peace. The world will be better off with a free Iraq. America will be more secure with a free Iraq. A free Iraq will send such a clear signal to people throughout the Middle East that freedom and liberty are possible.

* White House correction.

I believe that millions in the Middle East plead in silence for their liberty. I believe that given the chance, they will embrace the most honorable form of government every devised by man. I believe this, because freedom is not America's gift to the world; freedom is the Almighty God's gift to every man and woman in this world.

Audience members. Four more years! Four more years! Four more years!

The President. This young century will be liberty's century. By promoting freedom at home and freedom abroad, we will build a safer world and a more hopeful America. By reforming our systems of Government, we'll help more Americans realize their dreams. We'll spread ownership and opportunity to every corner of the land. We'll pass the enduring values of our country to a new generation. We will continue to work to make this world more free and, therefore, more peaceful.

For all Americans, these years in our history will always stand apart. You know, there are quiet times in the life of a nation when little is expected of its leaders. This isn't one of those times. This is a time when we need firm resolve, clear vision, and a deep faith in the values that make us a great nation.

None of us will ever forget that week when one era ended and another began. On September the 14th, 2001, I stood in the ruins of the Twin Towers. It's a day I will never forget. It's a day that workers in hardhats were there yelling at me at the top of their lungs, "Whatever it takes." I was trying my best to thank the workers, people who had been in the rubble. A guy grabbed me by the arm. He said, "Do not let me down." Ever since that day, I wake up every morning trying to better protect this country. I will never relent in defending America, whatever it takes.

Four years ago, I traveled your great State asking for the vote. I made a pledge that if you gave me a chance to serve, I would uphold the honor and the dignity of the office to which I had been elected. With your help, with your hard work, I will do so for 4 more years.

God bless. Thank you all for coming. Thank you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:40 p.m. at the Ross County Fairgrounds. In his remarks, he referred to Senator Zell Miller of Georgia, who made the keynote address at the Republican National Convention; Gov. Bob Taft of Ohio; Ohio Attorney General Jim Petro; Ohio State Senator Doug White; pro football Hall of Famer Anthony Munoz; Prime Minister Ayad Allawi of the Iraqi Interim Government; former Democratic Presidential candidate Howard Dean; and Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi of Japan. This item was not received in time for publication in the appropriate issue.

Proclamation 7809—National Alcohol and Drug Addiction Recovery Month, 2004

September 10, 2004

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

Across our country, millions of Americans suffer from the debilitating effects of alcohol and drug abuse. Substance abuse shatters lives, divides families, and robs people of their promise and potential.

My Administration is confronting these dangers. We are pursuing an ambitious, focused strategy to cut demand for drugs at home, disrupt supplies abroad, and ensure that citizens living with addiction get the treatment they need. We have made progress in fighting substance abuse, but there is more to do.

One of the worst decisions our children can make is to endanger their lives and their futures with alcohol or drugs. My Administration is addressing this problem with a strategy of education, treatment, and law enforcement. We also support random student drug testing as a prevention tool. We are seeing the results of all of these efforts, as more of our young people are also choosing to avoid alcohol and drugs. Drug use among youth has declined by 11 percent from 2001 to 2003.

My Administration is committed to expanding the choice of service providers for those struggling with addiction. We recognize the success of faith-based and community approaches in which caring citizens join together to offer alternatives to traditional